

# Safe Reintegration/Reunion

**A SELF PRESERVATION GUIDE  
&  
Tips for a Successful Reunion**

*1 Aug 05*

# Purpose

- To Reduce Trend of Airmen Returning to their Home Base & Suffering Serious Mishaps
- Tips to Ease Reunion Stress with Family

# Overview

- Safety
- Deployment Changes
- Successful Reunion Tips

# Off-duty Safety

## Take it easy with the alcohol consumption

- If you did not drink during deployment, remember that smaller quantities of alcohol will have a greater effect after 30 to 90 days without a drink
- Remember, the drinking age in the US is **21** (not 18!)
- **Never drink and drive** (No matter what you are operating—vehicle, boat, or your riding lawn mower)
- Fatigue kills
  - Do not plan on driving 12 hours straight (take a break, enlist another driver, or split the trip into two days)
  - Recommend getting a good night's sleep prior to departing on long trip (i.e. Don't jump in your car & drive long distance on your first day back)

# Off-duty Safety

- Pace yourself
  - You're not going to get every project accomplished in a day (don't rush projects that have waited 3 months....)
- Weather extremes
  - The weather back home may be different from what you're used to overseas - watch for fog and limited visibility from rain or snow. Drive and walk/run carefully due to potential ice/snow on the roads and sidewalks
- Re-check the safety of your home
  - It has been a while since you last checked your smoke detector batteries and home fire extinguisher - plan on inspecting them when you arrive home

# Off-duty Safety

- Verify your emergency phone list at home and make necessary updates
- Thoroughly inspect all of your tools, appliances, and recreational gear
  - Corrosion never stops and after your time away, it could have deteriorated critical components in your tools and other items around the house
  - This would be a good time to clean out the lint in the vent hose behind your dryer, which is a fire hazard
- Sunscreen
  - If you've been in the desert, don't stop wearing sunscreen just because you're home. Skin cancer afflicts many from not only a sunburn, but overexposure to the sun.

# On-duty Safety

- Force protection
  - 9/11 showed us that terrorists are both overseas and in the United States
  - Don't let your guard down just because you're “back home”
- Reacquaint yourself with your work center
  - Do you remember the emergency phone numbers?
  - Have any of the job procedures or equipment changed since you've been gone?

# Vehicle Safety

- The statistics do not lie, excessive **speed kills**
- Remember to **wear your seatbelt**
- Do not operate a vehicle with known safety deficiencies
- Re-check the safety of your vehicle
  - It has been a while since you last checked your oil / tires. Plan on thoroughly inspecting your vehicle when you arrive home
- Prepare for “home” distractions (children in the back, heavy traffic, and inclement weather)
- Plan for rest during extended drives. Fatigue is a leading cause of mishaps among vacationers
- Avoid the use of a cell phone while operating a vehicle

# Final Safety Thought

- The USAF has already lost more than one individual returning from a deployed location
- Don't be the next.....
  - Keep your guard up - be safety conscious
  - Practice ORM On & Off Duty

Tips to a Successful Reunion 

# Redeployment Smiles, Everyone!



# Has Deployment Changed You?



# Common Changes in Deployed Persons

- More accustomed to relating to unit personnel than to loved ones
- Not used to being around children
- More accustomed to having personal time
- Forgetting that family problems are often not as easy to solve as military problems
- May feel more important, prominent

# What has your spouse been feeling?

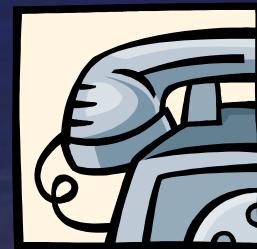


Keep the Ball  
Rolling

Long Hours  
Lonely



When is s/he going  
to write / call?



Hectic  
Schedules

Grind Stone



# Changes in your spouse?

- More accustomed to relating to kids, neighbors, and friends than to you
- More independent / new friends
- Daily routine altered around your absence
- More accustomed to having personal time
- Roles & responsibilities changed

# While You Were Gone: Typical Spouse Deployment Complaints

- Lack of companionship, intimacy
- Problems making decisions alone
- Fewer social outlets
- Difficulty disciplining children
- Handling finances alone
- Feeling unsupported
- If you've been unhappy, so have they

# Let's Talk Reunion: First, the Problems...

- Re-adapting to marital and family relationships
- Lack of time for family reintegration
- Shared checkbook / spending concerns
- Ongoing military stressors, reintegrating to work
- Inequities in homecoming celebrations
- Inequities in time off
- Alcohol use / potential misunderstandings
- Withdrawal / responsibility avoidance

# Potential Train Wreck?

Changes in You



Changes in Spouse



Expectations



Stress

Alcohol



# So How Do We Proceed? First Things First...

## • Your “Homecoming”

- Don’t try to “surprise” your family by arriving unannounced
- Talk ahead of time about what you’d like to do the first days back...and compromise on this
- Be realistic: fantasies about homecoming are seldom realities
  - Previous problems might still be there
- Might feel awkward initially
- You’ll be more tired than you think

# REUNION

- Expect emotional ambivalence (love/hate)
- Expect “Honeymoon” effect to be transient
- Expect independence (new hobbies, friends)
- Be prepared to reset goals (mutual plans)
- Be prepared to compromise
- Keep channels of communication open
- Be patient

# Tips for reuniting with kids

- Take time with each child
  - Let them choose activities
  - Ask them about their activities past 3 months
- Be understanding if children act withdrawn or angry; they missed you and it hurt
- Avoid changing or criticizing rules of spouse, especially in front of kids
- Large doses of compliments!
- Keep predictable routines, bedtime

# Single member tips

- Arrange to have friends or family meet you when plane lands. It's your celebration too!
- Separation puts pressure on relationships...go slow
- The constant companionship and shared space during deployment may make home feel a little lonely
- Friends may have made other friendships, some may have gotten married or moved - expect some changes
- Singles need time to readjust, just like married members
  - Co-workers may not understand you need time, too

# Back to Work

- Job may be gone / changed
- Office may be gone / moved
- May feel job has become boring
- Co-workers may resent leaving
- Work will be waiting for you!
- Be realistic and patient...use the same principles you use with your spouse
- They WILL be glad to see you!

# Stages of Adjustment

- Honeymoon: euphoria, relief, excitement, intimacy
- Fantasy Meets Reality: unrealistic expectations become apparent
- Readjustment: routine re-established at home, work, friendships

# Making the Adjustment...

- Recognize spouse's efforts
  - Actively search for things to compliment
- Trust partner made best possible decisions
- Expect conflicting feelings (e.g., happy/resentful) in spouse, and talk about them
- Avoid “one-up” game; both had stressors
- Schedule time w/ and w/o each other

# Making the Adjustment (cont'd)

- Expect interruptions from family and friends (schedule time w/ them, also)
- Re-negotiate roles—spouse may want to keep power vs. “dump” it on you
- Avoid complaints about lack of support...how many care packages did you send them?!
- Try “dating” spouse again; explore new common interests
- Expect adjustment to take several weeks

# Outside Services Stand Ready to Assist

- Services are Available - USE THEM!
  - Chaplains
  - Family Support
  - Life Skills
  - Family Advocacy
  - Tricare
  - Base Legal

# Internet Resources

- Military One Source 24/7/365:
  - [www.militaryonsource.com](http://www.militaryonsource.com)
- Minot AFB Personal & Family Readiness Guide:
  - [www.minot.af.mil/FSC.R&R/Readiness.pdf](http://www.minot.af.mil/FSC.R&R/Readiness.pdf)
- Resources for Parents, Teachers, and Family Support Professionals in times of war:
  - [www.cyfernet.org/warres.html](http://www.cyfernet.org/warres.html)
- Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD:
  - [www.ncptsd.va.gov](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov)
- Healthy Parenting:
  - <http://mfrc.aclib.com/healthyparenting/>
- AF Readiness EDGE Guide – Commanders & Supervisors:
  - <https://aefcenter.acc.af.mil/aefonline/documents/CommandersReadiness.pdf>
- AF Readiness EDGE Guide – Families:
  - <https://aefcenter.acc.af.mil/aefonline/documents/FamilyReadiness.pdf>
- AF Suicide Prevention Program:
  - <http://afspp.afms.mil>
- Leaders Guide for managing Persons in Distress:
  - <http://afspp.afms.mil/leadersguide/default.htm>
- Post Deployment Health Clinical Practice Guidelines:
  - <http://www.pdhealth.mil>